

JACKSONPORT STATE PARK

The rise and fall of the timeless Black and White Rivers shaped life and history here.

STORIES OF A RIVER TOWN

Due to its location near the confluence of the Black and White Rivers, the Jacksonport area was an important trade center in early Arkansas. Two trappers, Cartwright and Leausuteau, established a camp on the banks of nearby Jacks Creek in the early 1820s. In 1831, Thomas Todd Tunstall was the first steamboat pilot to venture up the White River to Batesville. Later in 1839, Tunstall purchased land and established the town of Jacksonport.

As the area prospered and grew, it developed into a busy steamboat port. Burly stevedores loaded timber, bear grease, cotton bales, and wild game on the steamboats. The county seat was moved to Jacksonport from Augusta in 1854. The peak of Jacksonport's influence came in the decades before and after the Civil War. Steamboats from the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers landed at the town year-round.

During the Civil War, Jacksonport was occupied by both Confederate and Union armies due to its strategic position. Five Major Generals used the town as their headquarters. On June 5, 1865, Confederate General Jeff Thompson, "Swampfox of the Confederacy," surrendered 6,000 troops to Lt. Colonel C. W. Davis at the Jacksonport steamboat landing.

The courthouse, constructed from 1869-72 by John A. Schnabel, is made of brick manufactured in Jacksonport and rests on a foundation of Izard County limestone. The massive beams supporting the mansard roof are hand-hewn from the heartwood of native cypress.

The Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad began laying track through Jackson County in the 1870s. It planned to add a spur at Jacksonport, but the steamboat operators and townspeople would not pay a \$25,000 fee to have the spur access Jacksonport. As the railroad industry prospered and steamboat transportation declined, Jacksonport slowly began to die without railroad access. A spur was later added, but it was too late to save the town.

For 25 years, Jacksonport continued to be an important steamboat landing, and though the town kept its faith in the river, trade and life eventually passed it by. The county seat moved to Newport in 1892, and Jefferson Street, with its mercantile houses, wharves, livery stables, and saloons, slowly vanished.

In 1962, the Jackson County Historical Society purchased the Jacksonport Courthouse with privately

donated funds. Restoration began the next year. In 1964, a portion of the town including the courthouse square and the steamboat landing, was bought by the Society. Jacksonport became a State Park in 1965. The Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism has continued restoration and development of the park with the support of the Historical Society. In 1970, the courthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

COURTHOUSE

The courthouse opened for business in 1872. The main entrance faced the White River and the town's business district on Jefferson Street. The ground floor housed county offices.

Upstairs, nine-foot double doorways, surmounted by beautiful fanlight windows, open onto wrought iron balconies at each end of the building. A matching doorway leads into the courtroom from the hall. Golden-tongued oratory once rang through these halls, and political "speeches" were given from the balconies. With benches pushed back, the courtroom was and still is used for balls and celebrations.

FACILITIES

Courthouse ♦ Museum exhibits illustrate the story of the courthouse and Jacksonport in five gallery rooms. The "Jacksonport" gallery shows the essence of Jacksonport's rich life as a steamboat town, and the challenge as an occupied town during the Civil War. The town's struggles to rebuild and regain identity after the war are emphasized. The "Clerk's Office" gallery traces the influence of county government on everyday life of the average citizen through court records and documents. The era is visualized by the display of a typical clerk's office with historic furnishings. "The Gallery" features original artifacts from the everyday life of the average citizens. Rotation of exhibits from the museum collection offer changes periodically. The "Post Script" gallery interprets the struggles of the courthouse and the community decline as a river town emphasizing the choices that were made to bring us where we are today. The "Courtroom" gallery allows you to step back in time to experience the drama of court in the 19th century. All courthouse exhibits offer you the opportunity to see and experience Jacksonport's rich cultural history in a unique and exciting way.

Camping ♦ Jacksonport offers a unique camping experience. Twenty Class "A" campsites with 50/30 amp electric and water hookups are set along the banks

of the White River. The campground rest room/shower facility, and one campsite are barrier-free.

Other Facilities ♦ A shaded picnic area within a stone's throw of the White River offers a fun place for family and friends. Rest rooms are nearby and a pavilion is available for rent. A visitor center in the courtyard provides visitor information, grocery items, and a gift shop where visitors can find souvenirs of their trip to historic Jacksonport. A boat ramp provides access to the White River and the half-mile Tunstall Riverwalk allows visitors to leisurely walk along the banks of the White River.

NOTE: Campers **must** register at the visitor center **before** occupying a campsite. All sites are reservable and may be reserved up to one year in advance. Please call to check availability. The pavilion must be reserved at the visitor center before being used (fee and deposit required).

LOCATION

Traveling north on State Highway 67 into Newport take exit 83 and turn left (west) on Highway 384 and travel one mile to Highway 367. Turn left (south) onto Highway 367 and travel 2 miles to Highway 69 and turn right (north). Travel Highway 69 three miles to Jacksonport.

For further information on park hours and fees, contact:

Jacksonport State Park
205 Avenue Street
Newport, AR 72112
(870) 523-2143
jacksonport@arkansas.com
Visitor Center GPS: 35° 38' 22" N / 91° 18' 37" W

For information on Arkansas's other fine state parks, contact:

Arkansas State Parks
One Capitol Mall, 4A-900
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 682-1191
www.ArkansasStateParks.com



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